

Iraq: Iraqis still waiting for justice five years after Tishreen protests

Friday 11 October 2024, by [PULIDO Daniela](#) (Date first published: 30 September 2024).

Amnesty International highlighted the failure of successive Iraqi governments to ensure justice, truth and reparation for the lethal crackdown on the 2019 Tishreen protests, in a report published on Monday. Titled “We hold them responsible for the blood of our youth,” the report reveals ongoing neglect and impunity five years after nationwide demonstrations led to hundreds of deaths and disappearances, and thousands of injuries among protesters.

The Tishreen [demonstrations](#), which began on October 1, 2019, saw hundreds of thousands of Iraqis demand job opportunities, improved public services, and an end to government corruption.

Amnesty International claims that the meager attempt at accountability stands in stark contrast to the scale of serious human rights violations and crimes under international law committed during and in the aftermath of the protests. According to Amnesty’s analysis of information from Iraqi courts, out of 2,700 criminal investigations opened, only 10 arrest warrants have been issued against suspected perpetrators, and a mere seven convictions have been handed down.

Aya Majzoub, Amnesty International’s deputy regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, stated:

The five-year anniversary of the nation-wide Tishreen protests is a stark reminder of ongoing entrenched impunity coupled with the Iraqi authorities’ lack of political will to ensure justice, truth and reparation to victims, survivors and their relatives for crimes under international law and other grave human rights violations committed by security forces and affiliated militias during and in the aftermath of the protests.

Based on interviews with 56 survivors, witnesses, and victims’ families, the report documents cases of intimidation and reprisals against those seeking justice. One case involves activist Sajjad al-Iraqi, reportedly abducted in September 2020, whose family has faced threats in their efforts to locate him.

While the Iraqi government reported compensating 504 families for the death of a loved one during the protests, injured protesters face bureaucratic hurdles to access compensation, according to the group. The organization’s findings suggest that successive Iraqi governments have established numerous committees to investigate protest-related incidents, but details about their work remain unclear, and many interviewees expressed skepticism about their effectiveness.

The report also discusses recent legislative proposals, including a protest law reintroduced to Parliament in May 2023, and a draft NGO law, both of which civil society representatives fear may further restrict civic freedoms.

Amnesty's report aligns with findings of the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearance (CED) from its April 2023 [mission](#) to Iraq, which pointed to ongoing abductions and arbitrary detentions of protesters. Many remain forcibly disappeared, with the CED [receiving](#) 28 urgent action requests related to those involved in the 2019 protests.

The report concludes by urging Iraqi authorities to conduct thorough investigations into protest-related incidents, establish a national database of disappeared persons, and ensure that proposed legislation on enforced disappearances aligns with international standards. The organization emphasizes the need for measures to prevent future human rights violations and address the underlying issues that led to the 2019 protests.

Human Rights Watch issued a [statement](#) on October 2, 2023, outlining cases of enforced disappearances linked to the protests, including activists like Abdel-Messih Romeo Jean Sarkis and Osama al-Tamimi. These organizations called for the implementation of UNCED [recommendations](#).

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